

# **New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report**

**SAU # 19**

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**Final Copy**

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# **New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report**

## **Table of Contents**

- I. Introduction
- II. Status of Corrective Actions from Previous On-Site
- III. Issues of Significance
- IV. Citations to the New Hampshire Standards for the Education of  
Students With Disabilities  
  
(Commendations, Citations, and Suggestions for each school)

Note: *It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.*

# **New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report**

## **SAU # 19 - Goffstown**

### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted at SAU # 19 comprised of the following schools: Maple Avenue School, Bartlett Elementary School, New Boston Central School, Dunbarton Elementary School, Mountain View Middle School, and Goffstown High School. The visiting team met on March 23 and 24, 1998 in order to review the status of Special Education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the special education director, building principals, regular and special education teachers and related service personnel, and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via phone. Throughout the visit the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

### **II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted on February 16, 1993***

Based on review of the previous program approval report and the findings of the team that visited all schools within the Goffstown School District in February 1993, it was the consensus that the district has made a serious effort to address the citations from the previous on-site.

The previous on-site team found no district wide citations but did identify several procedural errors at the individual building level. These errors appeared to be oversights in specific procedural items and did not represent a significant pattern at that time. The district has recently adopted the use of the state model forms and while this visiting team continues to find inconsistencies and oversights in paperwork, the staff have recently received related training in an effort to improve consistency in special education procedures.

### **III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

Throughout SAU #19 there is ample evidence of the ongoing efforts made in the areas of collaboration and programming among regular education and special education staff. There is an atmosphere of professionalism and respect among staff members and it is clear that there is a willingness to work cooperatively toward the improvement of all educational programming and an eagerness to continue to learn about any new, innovative methods of offering services to all students. The visiting team sees this spirit of interest in programming and willingness to continue working toward program improvement as an important and significant factor in SAU #19.

One issue that requires attention is in the area of staffing patterns throughout the school district. Special educators report widely varying caseloads. In one instance the number of special education students carried by the special educator is reported as 65 students. The district should take a look at the numbers of students requiring case management and at the professional staff available to offer such support. The assigned case loads should reflect a reasonable and manageable number of students to guarantee that students are receiving the special education services necessary for their educational growth.

The relatively high number of special education paraprofessional staff is also an important factor to consider in reviewing the district's staffing patterns. Paraprofessional staff require ongoing and regular supervision and support from a certified educator. The responsibility for this critical supervision falls to the special education teacher or licensed therapist. This additional role impacts the time available to provide direct services to identified students. The district should fully review the responsibilities assigned to all staff and make adjustments to staffing patterns where necessary.

The visiting team also found that special education student evaluations often take longer than 45 days. While extensions are signed, the visiting team felt that a pattern exists and that the district should explore the cause of the delays and develop a plan to address this area.

There is also evidence that a number of different special education forms have been used over the course of the past few years resulting in related inconsistencies in several procedural areas. The visiting team did observe a recent improvement as a result of the training and use of the State Model forms and feels that a new consistency in all procedural areas is becoming established.

The district has made numerous gains in the area of special education programming and procedures since the last program approval visit and is continuing to work toward ongoing program improvements. Significantly, this visiting team was impressed with the level of interest, pride and enthusiasm for the district's schools that was evident in the administration, professional and paraprofessional staff, students and parents.

#### **IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:**

##### **SAU WIDE**

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

##### **COMMENDATIONS:**

- The SAU is commended for the recent adoption of the state model forms and for the renewed effort toward consistency in the special education process throughout the district.
- The SAU is commended for plans to offer training related to special education issues.
- The newly created position of Special Education Director is seen by the visiting team as an important step toward improving the district wide consistency in compliance areas as well as in philosophy, programming and planning.
- The level of professionalism and commitment to improving educational programming is seen throughout this district and is a valuable asset.
- The administration, at both the district and building levels, is commended for their interest in and their leadership and support of special education programming .

##### **CITATIONS:** (in numerical order)

Ed # 1107.05 (k)      There is a pattern throughout the district of student evaluations taking more than 45 days to complete. While there are extensions evident in each case this pattern is significant and requires a review by district and building level staff.

##### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- The SAU should look closely at staffing patterns throughout the district to determine if appropriate and reasonable staffing patterns exist for special education instructional and related services staff. A plan to address the related issues of case management size, supervision of paraprofessionals, clerical support, assessment responsibilities and the delivery of special education services should be developed.
- The SAU should develop a plan to identify areas of training need and to offer ongoing sessions to all district professional and paraprofessionals staff .

<b>Maple Avenue PreSchool</b>
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**Program(s) Visited:**           Preschool

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- Student records are well organized; list of enclosed correspondence with dates is especially helpful.
- The staff at the Maple Avenue Preschool are dedicated and hardworking.

**CITATIONS:**

None

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- It is recommended that some time be built into the weekly schedule for team planning, consultations and parent contact.
- The district may want to consider the addition of an indoor motor area with appropriate preschool age equipment to address sensory and motor needs of the students.
- Review the amount of speech services available to preschool students to determine if additional services are needed.

<b>Maple Avenue Elementary School</b>
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**Program(s) Visited:** All

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- The school has a welcoming, child-centered atmosphere.
- Files are organized and well maintained.
- The school principal is involved in special education and is supportive of the special education team.
- There is good communication between the regular and special education staff.
- Special education evaluations are completed in a timely manner.
- The staff at Maple Avenue school are dedicated and hard working.

**CITATIONS:**

Ed # 1107.03 1 file: did not contain evidence of LEA representative at evaluation meeting.

Ed # 1115.06 2 files: did not show evidence of LRE consideration.

Ed # 1109.01(a) 2 files: present levels of performance were general, no measurable starting point or comparison to child's place compared to non-disabled peers.

Ed # 1107.08(d) 1 file: report was not signed by all team members.

Ed # 1111.01 1 file: no evidence that Extended School Year Programming was considered.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- Include more specific current levels of performance in IEP.
- Provide clear documentation of consideration of LRE.
- There is a need to review staffing patterns. Additional special education staff may be necessary as the current case management assignments are overwhelming to the present staff.
- The district is encouraged to provide staff development training for both regular and special education staff.
- The district may want to review the roles of the paraprofessional staff, particularly 1:1 assistants. The areas of training, supervision and communication are critical to the effectiveness of appropriate delivery of services to special education students. The responsibility for providing such support should be clearly defined and reasonable.

<b>Bartlett PreSchool</b>
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**Program(s) Visited:**          Preschool

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- Student records are in good order and well maintained.
- The staff at the preschool are hardworking and dedicated.

**CITATIONS:**

None

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- It is recommended that some time be built into the weekly schedule for team planning, consultations and parent contact.
- The district may want to consider the addition of an indoor motor area with appropriate preschool age equipment to address sensory and motor needs of the students.



<b>Bartlett Elementary School</b>
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**Program(s) Visited:** All

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- Student records were extremely well organized and very complete.
- The principal is very knowledgeable, supportive, involved and aware of special education programs, staff and students.
- The Bartlett Elementary staff is committed to inclusion of special education students in all areas of the school day.
- The warm small-school atmosphere at Bartlett Elementary enables accessibility and communication between regular and special education staff.
- Parents are involved and pleased with the communication from the school.

**CITATIONS:**

Ed # 1111.01 2 files: did not contain evidence that ESY was considered by April 30<sup>th</sup>.

Ed # 1109.11 3 files: statement of financial responsibility not included on IEP.

Ed # 1107.02 2 files: no evidence of initial referral to SEE/PT meeting.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- All evaluations reviewed reflected signed extensions of from 20-45 days. It is suggested that the district staff review the length of time it is taking staff to complete evaluations and create a plan for a more timely completion of assessments.
- The team suggests that Lois Shaughnessy share her system of file organization with other staff; the system is user-friendly and works well.
- The current full inclusion model appears to lack a full continuum of services. It is suggested that building and district level staff review the service delivery system presently in place to determine if an appropriate range of services is available for all students.
- Staff report a need for more instructional materials (manipulatives, visual materials). The building level staff should review materials available and determine if a need for additional materials exists.
- Availability of computers is limited and equipment is not current.

<b>New Boston Central Preschool</b>
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**Program(s) Visited:**          Preschool

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- This is an integrated center base program with a great ratio of students with disabilities and non-disabled peers involved in the preschool program.
- Planning is child centered with individual accommodations developed that aren't part of the "program".
- The building principal is very involved in the preschool program.
- There are sufficient materials and equipment, including sensory integration on site.

**CITATIONS:**

Ed # 1107.03          1 file: the multidisciplinary evaluation was more than 3 years old. Several areas have been completed, but certified educator (academic) still in progress.

Ed # 1107.05          1 file: the written summary report not completed for last 3-year evaluation.

Ed # 1125.03          1 file: Written Prior Notice for present school year was incomplete and part of team meeting minutes.

**SUGGESTIONS:**          None

<b>New Boston Central School</b>
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**Program(s) Visited:** All

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- The staff of New Boston Central School are committed to inclusion, dedicated and child centered.
- Creative use of space and staff is evident and a positive impact on students at the school.
- The atmosphere within the school is positive, upbeat and conducive to learning.
- The parent-teacher- volunteer sharing is a great model for others to follows.
- The building principal is supportive and encourages creative and new ideas from staff.

**CITATIONS:**

<u>Ed # 1107.05</u>	The team found evidence that the timespan from referral to completion of each evaluation does not fall within timelines. While signed extensions are evident the length of time required to complete the process exceeds a reasonable time limit.
<u>Ed # 1125.03</u>	Documents are not always completed or used appropriately, thus procedures are not accurately followed at all times.
<u>Ed # 1111.01</u>	Extended school year determination was not documented for all students.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- Administration and special education staff should review the referral and evaluation process to determine if any adjustments could be made to improve the efficiency of this process.
- Ongoing training should be offered to continue work in the area of special education procedures and consistency in paperwork.
- School staff may want to consider the adoption of a pre-referral process, such as a teacher assistance team.

<b>Dunbarton Elementary School</b>
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**Program(s) Visited:**

All

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- The inclusion model at the Dunbarton Elementary School seems to be working well.
- Communication and collaboration between regular and special education staff is positive.
- Staff at the Dunbarton Elementary School are knowledgeable and supportive.
- There is a warm, positive and child centered atmosphere at the Dunbarton Elementary School.

**CITATIONS:**

Ed # 1107.03(a)      2 files: did not contain evidence of teacher certified in the suspected area of  
Ed # 1107.07(c)      disability on evaluation team.

Ed # 1107.05(k)      3 files: did not contain evidence of evaluations completed within 45 days; all had  
signed waivers of 1-37 days.

Ed # 1111.01      3 files: did not contain evidence that extended school year programming was  
considered.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- LD teacher needs to be present at LD evaluation meeting.
- Need to work on completing evaluations within timelines.
- Explore ways to provide a more complete continuum of services for some students, particularly for those students with more complicated educational needs.
- Increase supervision/consultation time between special education teachers and other professional and paraprofessional educators.
- Consistency is needed in the use of forms; 3 different sets have been used in the last 2 years.
- Extended school year programming policy needs to be more clearly documented.
- Explore the need for a special education curriculum.

<b>Mountain View Middle School</b>
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**Program(s) Visited:** All

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- The programming and atmosphere of the Mountain View Middle School is conducive to providing education in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities.
- There is great communication between regular and special education staff. The team concept allows for common planning time and for communication.
- The regular education staff are knowledgeable about special education students.
- Staff at the Mountain View Middle School are dedicated with the student's best interest in mind.
- Ongoing consultation and communication with related services and outside support staff is commended.

**CITATIONS:**

<u>Ed # 1102.35</u>	2 files: did not include evidence of transition plan to exit program.
<u>Ed # 1111.01</u>	4 files: did not contain evidence that extended school year programming was considered.
<u>Ed # 1107.05(k)</u>	3 files: did not contain evidence that evaluation was completed within 45 days, no signed extension in file or extension beyond 45 days.
<u>Ed # 1109.01(i)</u>	2 files: evaluation criteria was not completed on all goals/objective forms.
<u>Ed # 1109.01(e)</u>	1 file: vocational education component not included in IEP.
<u>Ed # 1109.01(g)</u>	2 file: projected dates for initiation of services inconsistent between ASP and IEP.
<u>Ed # 1109.01(k)</u>	1 file: did not contain statement of financial responsibility.
<u>Ed # 1107.08(d)</u>	1 file: signatures not included on multidisciplinary team evaluation.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- Reorganization of paperwork in student records is suggested to allow for easier access of information.
- Training sessions are suggested to address the areas of special education procedure in an effort to provide building wide consistency in all process and paperwork.
- A review of student records is suggested to eliminate the multiple copies of documents.
- For large student records, it may be helpful to divide into groups, i.e. ASP/IEP, Medical Records, Meetings, Evals. Etc.
- Increase access to updated computers for special education students.
- Staffing patterns should be reviewed. The significant size of some special education case management assignments should be reviewed by district and building level administration and a plan should be developed to better equalize the case loads and related responsibilities.
- A review of the Behavior/Alternative programs is suggested in the areas of transition, discipline policies, roles of staff and procedures related to all special education process. The program remained unclear in focus to the visiting team and it is suggested that the program assume a more clearly defined structure.
- Staff report limitations in the physical space in some programs, which may have an impact on the provision of services to special education students. There is also some inaccessible aspects of a classroom for a physically disabled student. A review of the space available for special education programs should be done and adjustments should be made to fully accommodate all programs, whenever possible.

<b>Goffstown High School</b>
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**Program(s) Visited:** All

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- The special education staff is well regarded by the regular education staff.
- The atmosphere at Goffstown High School is supportive of inclusion and integration.
- The principal is involved and supportive of staff and inclusion.
- The heterogeneous core classes offered to ninth and tenth grade students appears to contribute to the success of the integrated programming available at the high school.

**CITATIONS:**

Ed # 1123.05 1 file: did not contain evidence that copy of parental rights given to parents.

Ed # 1131.02 2 files: did not contain evidence that vocational assessment was completed or statement as to why it was not.

Ed #1107.02 (b) (d) 1 file: no documentation of referral found in student record.

Ed#1102.35 2 files: contained no evidence that a transition plan was developed.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- In-service training for all staff is suggested, specifically regarding classroom modifications, is recommended.
- It is suggested that information in student records be organized in a more orderly fashion for easier access.
- There is a need to address a better understanding of the transition process by providing in-service training for teachers/case managers.
- There seems to be a lack of alternatives for students who have not made sufficient academic progress. There appears to be a large number of older students, juniors and seniors, who end up dropping out after two years of academic failure.
- Special attention needs to be paid toward complying with set "behavior plans" for students who have been suspended over ten days.

# **ADDENDUM**

## **JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM**

### **SAU # 19**

#### **Student File Review**

#### **Case Study Document**

#### **Reimbursement Claim Form**

#### **Case Study Addendum Form**



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ADDENDUM</b> <b>JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</b></p>
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**SAU #19**

**CITATIONS:**

<u>Ed #1107.05</u>	2 files: Evaluations not completed within 45 days. Extensions were signed in each case.
<u>Ed #1111.01</u>	1 file: No evidence that Extended School Year programming was considered.
<u>Ed#1130.03 (e)</u>	3 files: There was no representative from DCYF present as part of the team. However, there is evidence in two of the three files that they were invited but were unable to attend.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- The paperwork related to James O. Monitoring appears to be generally in good condition. The evaluation process is taking longer than 45 days, although extensions are signed. This is an area that could be examined for improvement.